

Key Takeaways from SCO Summit

Why in news?

India hosts 23rd SCO summit in New Delhi for the year 2023.

What is Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)?

- It is a Eurasian political, economic, international security and defence organization established in 2001.
- It is basically an extension of the **Shanghai Five Group (China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan)** that was created in 1996.
- At a historic summit in Astana, Kazakhstan (2017) India and Pakistan become full-fledged members of SCO.
- India's decision to become a full member of the SCO is in line with its current policy of multi-alignment and maintaining its strategic autonomy.
- **Headquarters-** Beijing(China)
- Since its inception, the SCO has mainly focused on
 - Regional security issues
 - Regional terrorism
 - Ethnic separatism
 - Religious extremism
 - Regional development
- **Member Countries-** 9 members- Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan, and **Iran** (latest member).
- **Significance-** The SCO is the world's largest regional organisation consisting of 40% of the world's population and 30% of global gross domestic product (GDP).
- The SCO has been an observer in the UN General Assembly since 2005.

What is the 23rd SCO Summit about?

- The 23rd SCO meeting of the council of heads of the member states was held virtually.
- This is the first time **India holds the presidency** of the SCO summit.
- **Theme - SECURE-** Security, Economic development, Connectivity, Unity, Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and Environmental protection.
- India has created **5 new pillars** and focus areas of cooperation in SCO –
 1. Startups and Innovation
 2. Traditional Medicine
 3. Digital Inclusion
 4. Youth Empowerment
 5. Shared Buddhist Heritage

- 24th SCO chair is **Kazakhstan** and the summit is to take place in Astana.

What are the key takeaways from the 23rd SCO Summit?

- **New Entrant-** Iran now become the full member of SCO which would help in achieving collective security and sustainable development.
- **New Delhi Declaration-** It deals extensively with challenge of terrorism, extremism and separatism and calls for country cooperation.
- It reaffirms its commitment to disrupt the terror financing channels, to suppress recruitment activities and cross-border movement of terrorists.
- **India's new Initiatives-** To foster the engagement with member countries India launched new initiatives like
 - SCO Millet Food Festival,
 - Film Festival,
 - SCO Surajkund Craft Mela,
 - International Conference on Shared Buddhist Heritage etc.,
- **De-Dollarization-** Countries spoke about the reducing the dominance of dollar in global markets.
- **China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) -** India refused to accept BRI as it is essential to "respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity" of member countries of the SCO.
- **Issue of Afghanistan-** India urged SCO members to come together to extend humanitarian assistance to Afghan citizens.
- **Inclusion of English -** India wants the inclusion of English as an official language besides Russian and Chinese to help disseminate SCO's views to a wider audience.
- **Joint statements-** Joint statements were released on
 - Cooperation in countering the radicalisation leading to separatism, extremism and terrorism
 - Cooperation in the field of digital transformation

What is the significance of India's Chairmanship in the SCO?

- **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam -** India reiterated its motto "The Whole World is a Family", its ultimate goal is global peace and security.
- New Delhi declaration- It pays special attention to religious intolerance, aggressive nationalism, ethnic and racial discrimination etc.,
- This would keep check on terrorism activities by Pakistan.
- **Soft power-** Varanasi is designated as the first tourism and cultural capital of the SCO.
- **Strategic autonomy-** India refused to accept china's BRI and SCO Economic Development Strategy.
- **Geopolitical advantage-** With Iran as a full member SCO India can deepen its relation and Russia would moderate the stance with China, this would promote regional peace and security.
- It promotes political settlement of international and regional hotspot issues, and build a solid barrier for regional security.

References

1. [Indian Express| Key takeaways from SCO](#)
2. [Indian Express| China view on SCO summit](#)
3. [Economic Times| Kazakhstan SCO summit](#)

